

Message Text

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SUBJ: NOTES FROM THE FRIULI EARTHQUAKE AREA

1. SUMMARY. WINTER COMES EARLY TO THIS MOUNTAINOUS REGION AND THE SUMMER DAYS ARE ALREADY SHORTENING. THUS ITALIAN POLITICAL ANTENNAE AT BOTH THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL ARE MORE THAN EVER ATTUNED TO THE 40,000 EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS STILL LIVING IN TENTS. THE HOPE HERE IS THAT ALL WILL BE HOUSED IN MORE PERMANENT STRUCTURES BY LATE OCTOBER. SIMULTANEOUSLY, REGIONAL AUTHORITIES ARE SEEKING TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ENORMOUS TASK OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE LONGER TERM RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STRICKEN AREA AND COORDINATING ALL RESOURCES NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IN THIS REGARD. LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE AWARE THAT ROME IS LOOKING OVER THEIR SHOULDER AND THAT THEIR EFFORTS IN MANY RESPECTS MAY BE THE TEST OF THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN ITALY. THUS, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON, REGIONAL OFFICIALS ARE FULLY EXPECTED TO TAKE A MUCH MORE FORCEFUL LEADERSHIP ROLE IN COORDINATING THE ASSISTANCE EFFORT. THEY ARE GRATEFUL FOR US AID, HAPPY WITH THE PROPOSAL FOR SCHOOLS BUT HAVE INDICATED A DESIRE TO GO SLOW ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOMES FOR OLD PEOPLE--FACILITIES WHICH IN THEIR VIEW MAY BE BEYOND THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO MANAGE AFTER CONSTRUCTION. END SUMMARY.

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2. NATIONAL INTEREST. PROMPTED BY CONTINUOUS AND EXTENSIVE

PRESS COVERAGE OF THE EARTHQUAKE REGION, NATIONAL POLITICAL CONCERNS REMAIN AT A HIGH LEVEL. DEFENSE MINISTER LATTANZIO VISITED FRIULI AUGUST 25. STATE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION DEL RIO MADE A RECENT SURVEY OF SCHOOL NEEDS. PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI IS DUE IN UDINE SEPTEMBER 3, AND HIS DC COLLEAGUE INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA WILL BE IN PORDENONE THE SAME DAY. A JOINT PARLIAMENTARY (AND POLITICALLY BALANCED) COMMISSION WILL MAKE AN ON-THE-SPOT SURVEY SEPTEMBER 13-15. ITS MEMBERS INCLUDE SENATORS GUI(DC), COLJANNI (PCI), TANGA (DC), MACALUSO (PCI), DE COCCI (DC), RIVA (REPRESENTING THE PLI AND PSDI), MELIS (INDEPENDENT LEFT) AND CROLLALANZA (MSI) AND DEPUTIES MAMMI (PRI), LA LOGGIA (DC), PEGGIO (PCI), BORTOLANI (DC), FORTUNA (PSI), COSTA (PLI), PINTO (PROLETARIAN DEMOCRACY) AND PANNELLA (RADICAL).

3. REGIONAL EFFORTS. REGIONAL PRESS COVERAGE OF THE DISASTER IS HEAVY BUT BALANCED. NEVERTHELESS REGIONAL AUTHORITIES UNDERSTAND FULLY THAT THEIR EFFORTS ARE UNDER CAREFUL SCRUTINY. THEY ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE 40,000 PERSONS STILL IN TENTS WILL BE HOUSED BY THE END OF OCTOBER: ABOUT 10,000 WILL RETURN TO THEIR HOMES AND THE REMAINDER WILL BE HOUSED IN THE PREFABRICATED DWELLINGS NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

4. US AID. AS FOR THE US DOLL. 25 MILLION GRANT, THE LOCAL PRESS INDICATES THAT REGIONAL OFFICIALS EXPECT AT LEAST HALF OF IT TO GO TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOLS IN THE AREA. IN FACT, LOCAL OFFICIALS DURING STATE SECRETARY DEL RIO'S RECENT VISIT ASSURED THE PRESS THAT IN VIEW OF ALL THE EFFORTS IN THIS AREA ALL STUDENTS WOULD BE IN SCHOOL BY MID-OCTOBER. WITH REGARD TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE, LOCAL OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED THEY WOULD PERHAPS LIKE TO SLOW DOWN IN THAT AREA SINCE SMALL COMMUNITIES IN THE REGION DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO MANAGE SUCH FACILITIES ONCE COMPLETED.

5. OTHER AID. IRISH AND FRENCH LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS HAVE CONTRIBUTED 53 MILLION LIRE TO THE REGIONAL RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT. EC EXPERTS ARE DUE IN FRIULI IN MID-SEPTEMBER TO EXAMINE THE SITUATION AT FIRST HAND. AT PRESENT AN EC-ITALIAN 48 BILLION LIRE PACKAGE IS UNDER CONSIDERATION:
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28 BILLION FOR AGRICULTURE, 9 1/2 BILLION FOR SOCIAL-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE, 6 BILLION FOR HOUSING FOR STEEL WORKERS AND 5 BILLION FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STEEL INDUSTRY. THE EC AND GOI WOULD EACH ASSUME 45 PCT OF THE COST WITH THE REGIONAL BENEFICIARIES PICKING UP THE REMAINING 10 PCT.

6. THE SUMMER POLITICAL RECESS IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE.

THE EXPECTATION IS THAT LOCAL POLITICAL MANEUVERING WILL
BE MORE LIVELY THAN USUAL BECAUSE OF THE TENSIONS AND
PRESSURES GENERATED BY THE EARTHQUAKE CRISIS. MOEN.

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